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SOME SPORTSMEN : No. 2.—THE DOCTOR.\*

FROM Monday morning to Friday afternoon you will find him in his consulting-room, in the heart of fashionable Doctor Land. He is a specialist, with the ripe experience of thirty or forty years and a record of wonderful cures behind him ; his power of concentration and diagnosis is remarkable even in these days of big achievements ; the faint-hearted and hopeless take heart of grace when he speaks to them. The consulting-room suggests a one-sided life ; its books are medical treatises and pamphlets on obscure diseases ; there are small cases of instruments, an electric apparatus, some bottles, and the Doctor himself fills the foreground of the picture—a big man with a head that inspires confidence in the student of physiognomy. In customary suit of solemn black the Doctor pro-

\* From the *Sketch*.

claims his calling ; meet him in the street, you would know him for one of the disciples of Æsculapius.

On Friday evening in the autumn and winter season you will see the Doctor at one of the great railway termini, and will wonder at the change. He wears a shooting suit, carries a gun and cartridges, a dog follows at his heels ; he is off to the country to shake off the fatigues of the past week and gather vigour for the week to come.

“ I am no longer a young man,” he said to me once, “ and five days in a consulting-room leaves me very ready for a day in the open air. If I’m to do justice to my patients I must be in the best possible condition.”

So he goes off in search of sport, and whether they be ground-game, or driven birds, or wild fowl, it is all the same to him. The fur or feather that gets away may indulge in self-congratulations. For the Doctor’s eye is as keen in the field as in the consulting-room, his hand is as steady with the gun as with the lancet. It has been my privilege to bear him company on many occasions, and he would be the first to acknowledge that he is a bit of a martinet. He has his own theories with regard to the land, the sport, the guns, and the wind ; if you have others it is best to get rid of them, for there is no room for two sets of opinions.

The Doctor explains the action of the leaf or flower, and turns again to the field. We walk over grass-fields with a dozen tussocks scattered here and there. Half a dozen he passes by ; the next he walks up to and pushes with his foot. Away goes the rabbit that could not conceal its presence, goes free for fully thirty yards, and then turns a somersault, neatly shot through the head. The bag mounts, I forget my original intention to have a full day’s shooting, and raise gun only if we put up partridges in easy range.

We put up for brief rest at some farmhouse or cottage. Somebody has an incurable ailment ; the Doctor asks a few questions, gives a few directions, or makes a note to send something from town. You know where he has been by the cures he leaves in his tracks. He is no faddist, but if you ask for his opinion you will have it—straight from the shoulder. If you don’t find it palatable, so much the worse for you. In his fearless, outspoken honesty he reminds one of another distinguished doctor, big-brained, big-hearted Max Nordau.

Shooting does not exhaust the Doctor’s activity. He swims, is an expert fisherman, and doubtless, in the days of lighter weight, followed the hounds in his native county. Special problems, theology, geology, early forms of worship, forestry, sport in all its forms—these are but a few of the questions upon which he will discourse for hours, while, if the shooting,

if for the size of the bag rather than the exercise, he is silent as a partridge when a hawk is hovering above the stubble. From head to heel he is a sportsman, and only a sportsman may claim his company in the field. He rejects imitations with scant ceremony.

The Cockney, with or without guilt, is better off in the nearest county. Woe to the man who loiters to pick blackberries, or puts down a gun without drawing the cartridge, or goes over a fence with a gun at full-cock, or fires into hedge that is lined on either side ! Woe to the cheerful idiot whose gun “ goes off by mistake ! ”

And, having taken every ounce out of his holiday-time, the Doctor returns to town, and Monday’s patients find him with strength renewed, like Antæus of old, from contact with the great Earth Mother.

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